

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 612

By Finney R.

A RESOLUTION to call for the creation of a comprehensive state plan to address climate change and limit greenhouse gas emissions in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, Tennessee lacks a comprehensive state plan to address climate change by minimizing fossil fuel emissions; and

WHEREAS, many states in the southeast, including South Carolina, North Carolina and Florida, have initiated state planning processes to limit their contributions to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the "Tennessee Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Strategies" report of 1999, prepared by Tennessee Technological University under the aegis of the Energy Division of the Department of Community and Economic Development, if updated with the latest scientific findings and emission reduction strategies can be used as a foundation for producing a comprehensive plan for Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, it is now recognized that if current greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced and if the emerging impacts on our agriculture, forests, homes, business, and economic and recreational activities are ignored then there will exist multiple threats to our lives, livelihoods, and way of life; and

WHEREAS, reductions in emissions will bring additional benefits to the public health, for example reducing the accumulation of the toxic metal mercury in the waters of the state and in the tissues of the citizens of the state, including pregnant women and unborn children, by reducing mercury emissions from coal fired plants; and

WHEREAS, at least thirty-six states and numerous counties and cities have and are preparing and implementing such plans; and to limit greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly may find the need to take action to reduce the state's emissions of global-warming pollution and may find it important to have the information necessary to consider the most cost-effective and efficient manner to respond; and

WHEREAS, many states and local governments are actively working to limit greenhouse gas emissions, because there is no announced plan of the federal government to lower greenhouse gas pollution on a national scale, thus leaving leadership for action on this vitally important public health issue to individual states; and

WHEREAS, there are many resources and recommendations to assist in the preparation of a state plan for climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as plans formulated by other states and their state climate commissions and energy conservation agencies, the potential benefits of partnerships with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Climate Resilient Communities program, and consultation with the Center for Climate Strategies and the Pew Center on Global Climate Change; and

WHEREAS, a new and comprehensive Tennessee Climate Action Plan is both necessary and timely, as a companion to the State Energy Plan requested by this Body in 2007; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that the Department of Economic and Community Development and its Energy Division and the Department of Environment and Conservation and its Bureau of Environment are urged to collaboratively prepare a Tennessee Climate Action Plan recommending specific actions, initiatives, policies and programs to be taken to limit greenhouse gas emissions in this state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Action Plan should include the following elements:

1. An update of the "Tennessee Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Strategies" report of 1999 with respect to the greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction recommendations to avoid or reduce impacts by sector;

2. A greenhouse gas emissions reductions target and an ongoing method to monitor and track the extent to which greenhouse gas emission reductions are achieved;
3. A discussion of, and recommendations concerning, changing impacts and threats of interruption of power from hydroelectric, coal and nuclear plants due to climate change, such as increasing water temperatures or lack of water to provide power plant cooling, while maintaining water quality standards and the availability of water for other beneficial uses;
4. Recommendations for ongoing state planning for climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as the creation of a state climate commission, or the potential benefits of partnerships, such as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Climate Resilient Communities program, and the benefits to the state of participating in the Chicago Climate Exchange; and
5. Recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor for legislative and executive actions respectively, and recommendations to the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) for actions and programs to limit energy production contributions to the state's greenhouse gas emissions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environment and Conservation should request assistance and recommendations from the Department of Transportation, including the Department's planning and environmental planning elements.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environment and Conservation should request assistance and recommendations from the University of Tennessee system and the State University and Community College System, particularly those elements of the institutions of higher education with special knowledge of climate change causes and impacts, including impacts on water supply quality and quantity, land use planning, sustainable agriculture, forests and forest health, air quality and pollution reduction, energy generation and energy conservation, efficient and renewable sources of energy, community and economic sustainability, and the quality of the human environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environment and Conservation should request assistance and recommendations from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) which is one of the leading national research institutions on the science of climate change and alternatives to fossil-based power generation and petroleum-based vehicle power.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environment and Conservation should request assistance and recommendations from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) concerning the impacts of climate change on wildlife in the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environment and Conservation should request assistance and recommendations from appropriate federal agencies and non-governmental organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environment and Conservation shall provide opportunities for public participation in preparation of the Action Plan including, but not limited to, specific efforts to incorporate input from organizations actively involved in, or having special knowledge of, climate change causes and impacts, including impacts on water supply quality and quantity, land use planning, sustainable agriculture, forests and forest health impacts, air quality and pollution reduction, energy generation and energy conservation, efficient and renewable sources of energy, community and economic sustainability, and the quality of the human environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environment and Conservation are urged to submit the Action Plan no later than February 1, 2009, to the Governor, the Speaker of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairpersons of the following committees of the General Assembly: Senate Commerce Labor, and Agriculture Committee; Senate Environment, Conservation and Tourism Committee; House Conservation and Environment Committee; and House Agriculture Committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development and the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation.